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WINE DRINKING AND WINE PROHIBITION IN ARABIA BEFORE ISLAM

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I. Introduction

Wine has been attested in the Ancient Near East since the earliest period (Forbes 1955: 70-78). Wine and beer were popular in Mesopotamia (Röllig 1970), in Egypt (Helck 1975; Meyer 1986) and in Syria-Palestine (Dommershausen 1982: 614-20). Moreover, in Mesopotamia and Egypt beer was part of the normal diet.

Wine was very common in Arabia before Islam. Some modern Arabic authors maintain that there are approximately a thousand words for wine beverages in Arabic, while others claim only 250 words. In his book al-Muḫaṣṣaṣ, 11, 72-81 Ibn Sīda collected about 100 names for wine. These words are to be found in Arabic lexica and in different Arabic classical authors, for example, the al-Fīrūzābādī wine-list (Fulton 1947: 579-85). The variety of the nomenclature of wine in Arabic indicates that wine was an important part of the daily life and culture of the Arabs.

Our information about wine in Arabia before Islam has been found in South Arabic, Palmyrene, and Nabataean inscriptions, in classical authors, Arabic authors, the books of *Ḥadīṯ*, the *Qur'ān* and in Arabic poetry before Islam. Some of these sources contain information on the prohibition of wine. However, it has been established that the prohibition of wine came through Islam (Wensinck 1978: 994-997).

Wine was a subject of books written by Arab authors in Medieval Islam (Heine 1982: XVI-XVIII), for example, *Quṭb as-surūr fī waṣf al-anbāḏ wal-ḫumūr* written by Abū Isḥāq al-Kātib al-Qairawānī, who is known as ar-Raqīq an-Nadīm (GAL, Supplement I: 252). Al-Imām an-Nawāǧī ('Uṯmān an-Nawāǧī) wrote two books about wine, *Ḥalbat al-kumait* and *Kitāb aṣ-Ṣabūḥ* (Heine 1982: XVII).

This paper is a presentation of wine drinking in Pre-Islamic Arabia. It will discuss wine drinking among the South and North Arabs, the phenomenon of wine prohibition in Arabia before Islam, some terminology for wine, wine in cults, and some aspects of wine production and the wine trade. I use the word wine as a translation for *ḫamr*, which is a general word for wine and beer drinks in Arabic.

II. Wine production and wine vessels

In both North and South Arabia wine was produced from dates, vine grapes, honey and cereals: corn, wheat, barley, millet, dura (Sadan 1978: 997-998; Grohmann 1922: 234-38; Moritz 1923: 37-39). Pliny and Strabo write that the Arabs produced wine from dates (Strabo XVI: 4, 25; Pliny VI: 32). According to Diodor, Osiris had discoverd wine near Nysa in Arabia Felix (Diodor I: 15; III: 64, 66). Moreover, Dionysos was reared in Nysa, where he dicovered wine and "taught mankind how to cultivate the vine" (Diodor IV: 2). It is to be noted that the location of Nysa is still uncertain.

Wine was prepared in the following vessels:
1. Wine-press (*maʿṣara, pl. maʿāṣir*): This was used for preparing wine from grapes. Wine-presses are combined with viticulture in Arabia like Yemen and aṭ-Ṭā'if and are well known in Syria-Palestine. Nabataean wine-presses were found in Negev (Glueck 1965: 524) and Hauran (Wellhausen 1897: 50). Al-Hamdānī mentioned that *al-Aʿšā* had his own wine-press in Aṯāfit in Yemen (al-Hamdānī, Ṣifa: 66).
2. Jars (*ǧirār*): They are used for making date-wine. In Yaṯrib (later on *al-Madīna*) special wine-jars were used called *ḥantam* und described as green jars (Lisān, article *ḥantam*).
3. Bottles: Gourd/calabash (*dubbā', qarʿ*) and a variety of squash (*yaqṭīn*) were used for fermented drinks.
4. Wine-skins (*ziqq, saqā'* etc., Sabaic, *sq'*, Sab.Dic.: 128; *saqā'* is usually a "water-skin"): These wine-skins were used all over Arabia for preparing and transporting wine. There are several words for different kinds of wine-skins, for example, *adkan* is a gray wine-skin (ash-Shāyeʿ 1991: 97) and *al-ʿātiq* is a large, good wine-skin (ash-Shāyeʿ 1991: 196).
5. Palm-trunks: *naqīr* "tiny spot on a date pit". These vessels, which are made from the trunks of palm trees, are used for preparing date-wine in East and Central Arabia (Wensinck: 6, 533).
6. *mafāḍiḫ*: The well known *faḍīḫ*-wine was fermented in *mafāḍiḫ* "wine vessels" (sg. *mafḍaḫ*, Wensinck: 5, 156). They were used in Yaṯrib and East Arabia.

7. Baskets: This kind of baskets, called *al-muzaffat* (Wensinck: 2, 337), was made of palm leaves and coated inside with asphalt (*zift*) or tar (*qaṭrān, qār*) to protect the liquid. It was used in Central and East Arabia. *al-muzaffat* could also be any wine vessel which was covered with asphalt.
8. Wine-filter: In general the Arabic words *miṣfāh* and *rāwūq* refer to wine filters. *al-miṣalla* and *al-mišḫala* "wine filter, wine strainer" are recorded to be of Yemeni origin (al-Muḫaṣṣaṣ: 11, 89).
9. *mwht*: This word is given by the Sab.Dic.: 159 to be possibly a wine-press.

The Arabs carried wine in wine-skins (*ziqq, saqā'*), decanters (*qulla*) and jugs which they called *dann*, pl. *dinān, al-azhar, ibrīq* etc. and used to drink from cups and goblets, to which they gave many names, like *qadaḥ, ka's* etc. and from bowls like *an-naǧūd, ṣaḥn.* Ibn Sīda registered more than fifty wine vessels in Arabic (al-Muḫṣṣaṣ: 11, 82-87). The wine was stored in wine-casks (*ḫābiya, pl. ḫawābī*) (Fraenkel 1886: 168); *ḫawābī sakar* are recorded to have been used in Khaibar (al-Wāqidī: 2, 664f.); *ǧauna*, pl. *ǧawānī* are also wine-casks coated with tar (ash-Shāye' 1991: 52; Lisān, article *ǧawana*; Fraenkel 1886: 169). Many of these terms are of Aramaic origin (Fraenkel 1886: 166-73).

There are some people who used to drink from golden and silver cups like the kings of al-Ḥīra, Ghassan and Petra and some poets like *an-Nābiġa aḏ-Ḏubyānī* ('Alī 1980: 4, 670).

III. Wine drinking

1. Wine drinking in South Arabia

Drinking wine was common in South Arabia. It is difficult to say when this custom started. It can be assumed it began in the first millenium B.C. and came from the North. The earliest evidence of viticulture was found in Upper Mesopotamia and North Syria.

The South Arabs produced their drinks from different sources: grapes, cereals, dates and honey. However, Strabo states that in Arabia Felix "The greater part of their wine is made from the palm" (Strabo XVI: 4, 25). Yūsuf 'Aballāh informed me that Indian figs are also used in Yemen for preparing an intoxicating drink. However, the old tradition of making wine and beer continued in the modern period (Grohmann 1933: 51f.).

The Yemen highland is a suitable place for wine production, and vineyards were spread over several regions in Yemen like Šibām/kawkabān. This was a famous region for vine culture in antiquity and still is today. Al-Hamdānī

mentioned more than eighteen different kinds of wine grapes grown in Yemen (al-Iklīl VIII: 119f.; al-Hamdānī, Ṣifa: 196; Grohmann 1922: 234-38). Moreover, he states two places for producing wine: Wādī Ḍahr (*ḫamr Ḍahr*) and Ṯāt (*ḫamr Ṯāt*) nearby Ḏamār (al-Hamdānī, Ṣifa: 129). According to the *Periplus*, wine was produced in large quantities in Southern Arabia (Casson 1989: 65). Al-Ǧabal al-Aḫḍar in Oman is a suitable place for viticulture. The people there made their own wine (Wellsted 1838: 1, 144). Pliny states that the island Tylos in the Arabian Gulf produced wine (Pliny XII: 23).

Wine culture was known in Ancient South Arabia; this is recorded in South Arabic inscriptions. We find the word *wyn* (pl. *'ywn*), *'nb* (pl. *''nb*) (Sab.Dic.: 166, 17) with the meaning "vineyard". These words are attested several times in inscriptions ('Aballāh 1988: 81-100; Hommel 1889: 653-63; Nöldeke 1910: 64). Wine banquets with singing girls (*qiyān*) are recorded by Arab authors (al-Asad 1988: 54-61). Al-Hamdānī mentioned singing girls from the time of *'Ād* (al-Iklīl VIII: 215-17). Such singing girls were found in the art of South Arabia; a Sabaean woman playing a lute is depicted on a funeral stele (Grohmann 1963: 225, Pl. XVII,1).
Unfortunately, in Arabia we do not have drinking scenes like those of Mesopotamia, Syria or Egypt. Nevertheless, we have a banquet scene from South Arabia; in a Sabaic stele, the upper part bears a Sabaic inscription (CIH 445), and the first register shows people drinking wine and listening to music (Grohmann 1963: 227, Pl. XVIII, 1; Müller 1987: 52).

There are several terms for wine-drinks in South Arabic. Below is a brief description of the vocabulary:
1. *mzr/mizr*: It is mentioned in South Arabic inscriptions (CIH 540/50; 'Aballāh 1988: 81-100). The Arabic classical authors mentioned this word as a Yemeni word (al-Selwi 1987: 198). According to these authors *mizr* is a kind of drink produced from cereals: dura, corn or barley often mixed with honey (al-Selwi 1987: 198). In a Sabaic inscription "*mzr* of dates" (*mzr ḏtmrm*) is mentioned (CIH 540/50). According to Nöldeke the Ethiopian word *mezr* "corn drink, beer" is of South Arabic origin (Nöldeke 1910: 57). Apparently *mizr* was a popular drink; it has been described by Arab authors to be the wine itself (*wal-mizr huwa l-ḫamr*). In a *Ḥadīṯ* the *mizr* is mentioned with two other harmful things, wine (*ḫamr*) and gambling (*maysir*-play). The prophet Muḥammad said: "Allah prohibited *al-ḫamr wal-maysir wal-mizr* for my community" (Wensinck: 6, 206). *mizr* along with *bit'* are considered to be national drinks in Yemen. They continued to be consumed in the Islamic period. It is interesting to find *mizr* in Egypt in the Islamic period (Ibn al-Baiṭār IV: 155), where it seems to have been produced in large quantities and was taxed (Lutz 1922: 95). The word *mizr* is considered to

be a kind of beer; this word is used also for different kinds of beer and wine.
2. *fṣym*: It is a kind of raisin wine in Sabaic (CIH 540/48, 94; CIH 541/128). The North Arabs produced a beverage from raisins called *mā'u z-zabīb* "raisin water". According to Yāqūt (Yāqūt III: 499) aṭ-Ṭā'if was a famous place for raisins.
3. *ḥlb*: *ḥalb* is a kind of date drink (*šarābu t-tamr*, Lisān, article *ḥalaba*). It may be found in a Sabaic inscription (CIH 541/130). *ḥlb* is also considered to be a "measure of volume" in the Sab.Dic.: 67.
4. *ġrbbm/ġirbīb*: It is a kind of red or dark [black] wine prepared from black grapes (see *yyn kḥl* "dark wine" from Palestine (Demsky 1972: 233f.). Its name is based on its coulor *ġirbīb* "black" (Fischer 1965: 201). *ġirbīb* is a kind of high quality black grape grown at aṭ-Ṭā'if; this is mentioned by Arabic authors (Lisān, article *ġaraba*). It is also found in Sabaic inscriptions (CIH 540/48, 93; CIH 541/128).
5. *Bit'*: It is a drink from Yemen made from honey (al-Selwi 1987: 40). It is mentioned in a *Ḥadīṯ*, where Abū Mūsā al-Aš'arī told the prophet Muḥammad: "There is a drink in our land made from honey called *Bit'* ". This drink was continued to be drunk not only in Yemen but also in Egypt (Ibn Qutaiba: 182).
6. *ġubayrā'*: This is also a drink made from wheat or barley, and it is mentioned in a *Ḥadīṯ* as the following: "Some people from Yemen came to the prophet Muḥammad ... and asked him about a drink made from wheat or barley ... called *al-ġubayrā'* " (Lisān, article *ġabara*; Ǧawālīqī: 284).
7. *ṣa'af*: It is a wine used in Yemen; it is prepared from grapes and sometimes mixed with honey and also described as a fermented drink made from honey (al-Selwi 1987: 133). The word *ṣā'f* means "new wine" in Ethiopian (Leslau 1991: 543).

There are also other words in South Arabic inscriptions which could have the meaning "wine" like *myṯ* (Sab.Dic.: 89). Our information about wine in South Arabic are from the following inscriptions:

1. CIH 541

127. *wṯlṯ / m'tm / ''blm /*
128. *sqym / ġrbbm / wfṣym*
129. *w'ḥd / 'šr / ''lfm / 'l*
130. *ḥlb / sqym / ḏtmrm*

127. and three hundred camel-loads
128. wine-skins of *ġirbīb*-wine and *faṣy*-wine
129. and eleven thousand
130. (ḥalab-wine?), a drink of dates

2. CIH 540
45. .../ *w*
46. ṯlṯy / w'rb' / m't
47. m / ''blm / sqym /
48. ġrbbm / wfṣym /
49. wṯty / m'tn /''
50. blm / mzrm / ḏtm
51. rm...
91. ...ws
92. ṯ / m'tm / ''bl
93. m / sqym / ġrbb
94. m / wfṣym...

45. and
46. four hundred and thirty
47. camel-loads wineskins
48. of *ġirbīb*-wine and *faṣy*-wine
49. two hundred
50. camel-loads of *mizr*-wine from
51. date...
91. ... and six
92. hundred camel-loads 93. wineskins *ġirbīb*-wine
94. and *faṣy*-wine...

3. The sun hymn "*Tarnīmat aš-Šams/al-Qaṣīda al-Ḥimyariyya*"
This inscription is written on a rock in Wadi Qāniya in the region of as-Sawādiyya, and was discovered by Yūsuf 'Aballāh in 1977 ('Aballāh 1988: 81-100). The inscription has 27 lines. Every line has the ending -*ḥk*.

The line 13 (*wyn / mzr / kn / kšqḥk*) is interesting because the words *wyn* and *mzr* are mentioned. Yūsuf 'Aballāh translated it into Arabic: "*wal-karmu ṣāra ḫamran lammā saṭa'ti*" which means "the vineyard became wine after your shining". There are some indications from this text that the sun goddess *Šams* in South Arabic was a deity of justice (Höfner 1965: 467f., 528-33). The association of wine and the deity *Šamaš*, the divinity of justice in the Ancient Near East, especially in Mesopotamia, can be found in a saying from the wise *Aḥiqār* (Kottsieper 1990: 19, col. IX 14-15) as the following:
- There are two things which are good,
- and a third which is pleasureful to Šamaš:
- one who drinks wine and pours it,

- one who masters wisdom [and watches over it],
- one who hears a word but tells it not,
- now this is precious to Šamaš.

2. Wine drinking in North Arabia

Wine drinking was very common under the North Arabs before Islam. We have good information about this from Arabic poetry (al-Asad 1988; Ḍaif 1991; Jacob 1897: 96-109; Kračkovskij 1932: 146-64). It is not our purpose here to discuss what the poets before Islam said about wine; however, for example, poets like *al-A'šā*, *'Amr bin Kulṯūm* and others praised wine in their poems and called it by many names. The wine poem *ḫamriyya* which was famous in the Islamic period began in the Pre-Islamic times (Bencheikh 1978: 998-1009). We are also informed about wine from books of drinks *kutub al-ašriba*, which are contained in the books of *Ḥadīṯ*, from *Qur'ān* (Haeuptner 1966: 78-88) and from Arabic classical authors.

The popularity of wine drinking is indicated by the presence of wine shops and taverns (*ḥāna, ḥānūt*). In addition, there are many Arabic words which are used in connection with viticulture. Some of these wine names are given according to their place of origin, like *al-'āniyya*, wine from 'Āna on the Euphrates and *al-ḥīriyya*, wine from al-Ḥīra (al-Hamdānī, Ṣifa: 129; Heine 1982: 2-6). *aš-šamūl* mentioned by *Labīd* and others is a wine imported from the North, or a wine cooled by the North wind (*rīḥ aš-šamāl*). Other kinds of wine are named according to the way they were produced, like *al-mu'attaqa*. Some names are adjectives or colours like *al-kumait* and *'ayn ad-dīk* "cock's eye" etc. The following are some of these names: *ar-rāḥ, qahwa, 'aqār, al-iṯm, al-'alīq, al-ka's, al-'atīq, an-nabīḏ al-mu'attaqa, al-muzzā'* etc. Below is a discussion of some examples:

1. *ḫamr*: This word means "wine grapes, wine". It is a general word in Arabic for all alcoholic drinks. *ḫamr* must be considered common West Semitic word (Dalley 1984: 89-91; see Akkadian *karānu*, CAD 8: 203ff.; Leslau 1991: 262; al-Selwi 1987: 80); and in Arabic is not to be assumed to be of Aramaic origin (Fraenkel 1886: 161; Jeffery 1938: 125; Hebbo 1970: 102-6). The word *ḥmr* is attested in an Aramaic ostracon from Taymā' (Livingstone 1983: 108).
2. *wayn*: This word is common in West Semitic (North West Semitic *yyn*, Leslau 1991: 623). In Arabic it means mainly "black grapes". The etymology and origin of *wayn*/wine has been under discussion for a long time (van

Selms 1974: 76-84; Seltman 1957: 14-31; Dommershausen 1982: 614-20).
3. *as-sakar*: It is an intoxicating drink prepared from dates and grapes. This kind of drink is associated in Arabic with the verb *sakira* "to be drunk, become intoxicated" and the word *sakra* "drunkenness, intoxication". According to Abū Ḥanīfa (Lisān, article *sakira*) *as-sakar* is made from dates and a species of cuscuta or dodder (*kušūṯ, kušūṯ*, Lane: 2613) and myrtle (*ās*). *as-sakar* is apparently a common Semitic word (Leslau 1991: 497; ash-Shāye' 1991: 139); see also Akkadian *šikaru* (Röllig 1970) and Aramaic *šikrā* "date wine" (Jeffery 1938: 172f.).
4. *ar-raḥīq*: It is an old and exquisite wine mentioned by *Labīd* and others (ash-Shāye' 1991: 110). *raḥīq* and *ruḥāq* mean in Arabic "pure, nectar" (Lisān, article *raḥaqa*).
5. *al-mudām*: It is also called also *al-mudāma* (ash-Shāye' 1991: 99f.). It is derived from *dāma* "to continue" and interpreted in Lisān (article *dawama*) as the following: it is called so because nothing else can be continued to be drunk like it, or it can be old wine.

These are some examples for wine loan words in Arabic. Some of these words are of Greek origin which came into Arabic through Aramaic and are mentioned by Pre-Islamic Arab poets (Fraenkel 1886: 162-63): *iṣfinṭ/iṣfanṭ* "an aromatic wine" (as-Shāye' 1991: 138). *ḫandarīs* "old wine" (ash-Shāye' 1991: 90). *tiryāq/diryāq* (ash-Shāye' 1991: 32) and *rasāṭūn* (Fraenkel 1886: 163). Several Arabic or South Arabic words for viticulture are either common Semitic or common West Semitic. This means that these words are not of Aramaic origin in Arabic as Fraenkel (1889) and Jeffery (1938) suggested.
as-sukruka or *as-sukurka* is given by Arab authors as an Ethiopian drink made from dura (Lisān, article *sakira*). Ǧawālīqī wrote that the *ġubairā'* and *as-sukruka* are Ethiopian drinks introduced to the Arabs (Ǧawālīqī: 284). *as-sukruka* recorded to be the same drink *as-suqurqa'*, a drink for the people of Ḥiǧāz (al-Muḫaṣṣaṣ: 11, 91).

The Arabs distiguished different colours for wine. Red wine and white wine were already known in the Ancient Near East (Dalley 1984: 90f.; Paul 1975: 42-44). It is likely that the Arabs used to drink mainly red wine. This is clear from the wine names: *ad-dam* "red wine"; *dm* is also red wine in Palmyra. *dam az-ziqq* "the blood of the wine-skin"; *dam al-ġazāl* "gazelle-blood"; *ṣahbā'* "red-brown-, reddish-wine" (ash-Shāye' 1991: 173); *al-kumait* "red-dark wine" (ash-Shāye' 1991: 274); dark-wine is also mentioned by *Labīd*. Saffron (*za'farān*) and goldish (*ḏahabīya*) and rosé (*wardīya*) are mentioned to be colours of wine.

They drank wine pure (*ṣirf*, ash-Shāye' 1991: 167) or mixed with water, honey (*mamzūǧa*) or with frankincence or myrrh (Lutz 1922: 28, 30). Some

added spices like pepper (Lutz 1922: 23; *filfil*, al-Asad 1988: 174; Haeuptner 1966: 80f.). Old wine was a favorite and always mentioned by the poets. Wine jugs were covered with *rayḥān* "sweet basil (ocimum basilicum)", wines were stamped (*maḫtūma*), and some of them were wrapped in straining-cloth (al-Asad 1988: 66; Jacob 1897: 101). Sealed wine (*ar-raḥīq al-maḫtūm*) is a wine drunk in paradise in the *Qur'ān* (83: 25). There are no indications that the Arabs used a reed to drink wine like in Mesopotamia and Egypt. People met in wine shops and bars, which they called *ḥāna, ḥānūt* and *ma'laf* "favorite place, Stammkneipe", which were found everywhere in the cities: in Mecca, Medina and aṭ-Ṭā'if etc., and in all stations on the trade roads. In the desert, wine shops were temporary; the wine sellers came, pitched their tents, making a sign or a flag on them, and lowered the flag when they had sold everything they had (al-Asad 1988 57-61; Jacob 1897: 100).

The daily life of the taverns, drinking scenes, the waiter (*as-sāqī*), his earrings (al-Asad 1988: 64), his clothes are described in detail in the wine poems. Moreover, we are informed about the singing girls (*qiyān, qaināt*); mostly only two are mentioned, who danced, sang and served wine in these bars. Parties with music were often held in these bars (al-Asad 1988: 64-68; Farmer 1973: 1-19). We also have many stories about the daily life of these wine shops in books of Arabic history and in commentaries to the *Qur'ān*.

Of interest are stories and anecdotes about wine drinking and inebriation, for example, the following: "The guarding of the house [*ka'ba*] was in the hands of [the tribe] Ḫuzā'a and later on it was under the control of a man of this tribe named Abū Ġabšān in the time of Quṣaiy bin Kilāb. Quṣaiy met him in aṭ-Ṭā'if for a drink, and Quṣaiy gave Abū Ġabšān al-Ḫuzā'ī to drink until he was drunk and cheated him and bought from him the keys of the *ka'ba* for a wine-skin" (Abū l-Fidā': 1, 107). Aṭ-Ṭā'if was famous for its wine. *Abū Miḥǧan aṯ-Ṯaqafī* (al-Aġānī: 19, 1-13; GAL I: 35) from aṭ-Ṭā'if was famous through his struggle in the battle al-Qādisiyya against Persia, where he was arrested because of his drinking. *Abū Miḥǧan*, who drank in Pre-Islamic times, continued to drink in Islam and was a famous poet through his wine songs, for example:

iḏā mittu fa-d-finnī ilā aṣli karmatin
turawwī 'iẓāmī ba'da mautī 'urūquhā
When I am dead, bury me by the side of a grapevine
Its roots may quench my bones after my death

The Arabs drank a morning draught and called it *aṣ-ṣabūḥ*, and they drank an evening draught and called it *al-ġabūq*. The midday drink was named *al-qayl*, the midnight was *faḥma*, and the dawn draught was *ǧāširiyya*.

Wine drinking was also widespread in the desert (al-Asad 1988: 57-65). The

Nabataean inscriptions.
A very good example of wine drinking among the Nabataeans is the equating of the central god of the Nabataeans *Ḏū š-Šarā* with Dionysos.

We are informed by classical authors that the Nabataean kings celebrated banquets with singing girls (*qiyān*) and drinking. We know this from Strabo in the following citation: "They prepare common meals together in groups of thirteen persons; and they have two girl-singers for each banquet. The king holds many drinking-bouts in magnificent style, but no one drinks more than eleven cupfuls, each time using a different golden cup" (Strabo XVI: 4, 26).

4. Wine drinking in Palmyra

In Palmyra, where a mixed Arab-Aramaic society lived governed by the Arab dynasty of Odhaina, wine is mentioned several times in Palmyrene inscriptions.
The following inscription is a good example for wine drinking in Palmyra; it was made by a servant of the gods, who brought up wine to the priests (Rosenthal 1967: Palmyrene, No. 13).
The text:

1. [by]rḥ tšry šnt 555
2. brbnwt mrzḥwt yrḥy 'grp' yrḥy
3. ydy'bl 'g' y'wt dy šmš 'lhy' w ytb 'l
4. qsm' št' klh w 'sq ḥmr' 'tyq'
5. lkmry' št' klh mn byth w ḥmr bzqyn
6. l' 'yty mn m'rb' dkyryn w brykyn
7. prṭnks w mlkws' bnwhy w 'gylw ktwb'
8. w zby brś'd' dy hw' 'l bt dwd'
9. w yrḥbwl' mmzgn' w msy'n' klhwn

1. In the month October 243 A.D.
2. in the time when the president of the religious festival was Yariḥī Agrippa Yariḥī
3. Yadī'bēl 'Ogā Yaġūṯ, who served the gods and presided
4. over the divination the whole year, brought up old wine
5. for the priests the whole year, from his house, and wine in wine-skins
6. which has not been brought from the west; may they be remembered and blessed
7. Pertinax and Malkōsā his sons and 'Ugaylū the scribe
8. and Zabbay Barśa'dā who was in charge of the kitchen
9. and Yarḥibōlā the wine-mixer and all the helpers

The Palmyrene inscriptions inform us about different kinds of wine; in some of them, it is difficult to define exactly what kind of wine is indicated. Some examples are: *ḥmr' 'tyq'* "old wine". *ḥmr ḥdt* "new wine". *dmy ḥmr'* "red wine" *'zy ḥmr* "a wine of good quality, strong wine". *ḥmr qšr* "strong wine" (Ingholt-Seyrig-Starcky 1955: 90-92, No. 692-708).

IV. Wine trade

We have some information about wine trade in Southern Arabia from the *Periplus.* According to the *Periplus* South Arabia imported wine from Syria, particularly Laodicean (Latakia) wine (Casson 1989: 20, 133, § 6: 2. 32-33). South Arabia did not need much wine because they produced it themselves, so the *Periplus* gave advice to the merchants to unload only little wine in Arabia, because they had much of it (Casson 1989: 61, § 17, § 24: 8.6). South Arabia was not only a place for producing wine, but it also exported it. Wine from Arabia was exported to Barygaza in India (Casson 1989: 81, § 49) and was probably picked up in Muza (Casson 1989: 21, 207).

Not only was wine drinking popular in Palmyra, but we also have some information about the wine trade. Wine production was important in Palmyra, but it also was an important part of the commercial activities of the Palmyrenian merchants. Apparently wine was popular in Palmyra; this popularity is reflected in the famous Palmyrenian Tariff-inscription from the year 137 A.D., which was written in Greek and in the language of Palmyra and stood in the center of the city; here wine is mentioned together with wheat and straw, etc. "The tax-collector shall levy for a camel-load of wheat and wine and straw and such like, for each camel-load, for one journey 1 denarius" (Cooke 1903: 147, 9-10).

In North Arabia we know that in addition to the local prodution of wine they imported wine from Syria, Palestine (Lutz 1922: 37f.; Ben-David 1974: 107-111; Wensinck : 2, 337; Millard 1962: 201-3) and Iraq (Forbes 1955: 70-72; Wilson 1972); in these countries there were many Arabs many centuries before the Islamic conquest; it was an open extended area for the Arabs of the Arabian peninsula. The wine of these countries was of better quality and was famous in antiquity; Syrian wines were especially of excellent quality (Lutz 1922: 22f.). From poetry before Islam we know a number of places famous for wine, like Andarīna in North Syria, 'Āna, Buṣrā, Ṣarḫad, Bayt Ra's. Yāqūt mentioned two places with this name, one in North Syria and the other in Jordan (Yāqūt: I, 776), al-Ḫuṣṣ, al-Ḥīra and others (al-Hamdānī,

association of bedouin life, the life of the desert, and wine drinking is to be found in the fantasy of the poets in descriptions of the enjoyment of wine drinking: the poet *'Abda bin aṭ-Ṭabīb* described a shining bar in the night from far away as *a ka'ba* (al-Mufaḍḍalīyāt: 26, 72; al-Asad 1988: 67). The poet *Al-Munaḫḫal al-Yaškurī* (Ḍaif 1991: 74) said:

wa-iḏā sakirtu fa-innanī rabbu l-ḫuwarnaqi was-sadīri
wa-iḏā ṣaḥawtu fa-innanī rabbu š-šuwayhati wal-ba'īri
And if I am drunk, I am the lord of the Ḫuwarnaq and the Sadīr (two palaces near by al-Ḥīra)
And if I am awake, I am the lord of a small sheep and a camel

Drinking wine was especially common among the aristocracy of Mecca; here we have evidence of parties with singing girls and dancing girls (al-Asad 1988: 50-52). The following story is an example for Mecca: "When the 'Ād delegation stopped off at the home of Mu'āwiya bin Bakr, they remained with him for a month, drinking wine while the two singing-girls (the two were called *al-ǧarādatān*, "two locusts") of Mu'āwiya bin Bakr sang for them" (aṭ-Ṭabarī I: 219f.).

This tradition, which had been found under the Nabataean kings, continued in Mecca and other cites like Yaṯrib and later is found in Islam. We also have some information about using wine as a means for suicide; Ibn Ḥabīb in his book *al-Muḥabbar* (470-73) mentioned some of these people like *'Amr bin Kalṯum at Taġlibī*. It was the custom of bedouin tribes to disown drunkards (Ḍaif 1991: 70). We do not have information from Arabic books about women drinking wine, but the singing girls surely did.

It was the Arabic custom to stop drinking if they had to take blood-revenge. This is what happened to the poet *Imra' al-Qais*. When he was in *Dammūn* in Yemen, he heard the news that his father had been killed. After seven nights of drinking he vowed to stop drinking until he had taken blood-revenge for his father (Ḍaif 1991: 237).

3. Wine drinking among the Nabataeans

Originally, it appears that the Nabataeans did not drink wine. This is what is recorded by Diodor (Diodor XIX: 94), but later it is likely that wine drinking was very common among the Nabataeans. Wine growing in the Nabataean regions Negev and Hauran was well developed. In Hauran the vine culture and wine producing continued until the Omayyad and Abbasid periods. The wine of Buṣrā and Dir'ā was famous (Heine 1982: 2-5; Kračkovskij 1932: 146-64). Unfortunately we are not informed about the wine culture from the

Ṣifa: 129). Many of the merchants were Christians and Jews. Wine traders from Yaṯrib and Mecca also have been recorded, for example: *'Uqba bin Abī Mu'aiṭ* (al-Asad 1988: 83). It should be noted that in the desert the word *tāǧir* for the Bedouins mainly means wine-merchant. The wine sellers in Yemen are called: *al-battā'*, "one who sells *bit'* " (al-Muḫaṣṣaṣ: 11, 81), *al-mazzār* (Nöldeke 1910: 57) and *aṣ-ṣa''āf* (al-Selwi 1987: 133). Several names for wine merchants or wine makers are attested in Pre-Islamic Arabia, like *as-sakkār, an-nabbāḏ* and *al-ḫammār.*

Ghazza was an important port for Arabian trade a long time before Islam; the wine Ghazza was famous in the Byzantine period and has an international reputation (Mayerson 1986: 75-80; Lutz 1922: 32; Grohmann 1933: 112). Ghazza supplied Egypt and Syria with the best wines (Pigulewskaja 1969: 56). A kind of wine jar (Gazition) was discovered there (Mayerson 1992: 76-80). One may assume that the wine of Ghazza was imported into Arabia. We have information that Phoenician merchants shipped wine to Arabia (Lutz 1922: 31). Shipping wine to Arabia is mentioned by *Labīd.* In a dedication inscription from Hatra there is mentioned: *qymy brt 'bdsmy' ḥmr' 'ntt nšr'qb* "qymy, the daughter of *'bdsmy'*, the wine-merchant, the wife of *nšr'qb*" (Aggoula 1991: No. 35).

How much a wine-skin cost depended on which kind of wine it contained; it has been suggested that a wine-skin of good quality cost a camel three years old (Jacob 1897: 104). *Al-A'šā* once had to pay a white she-camel and nine drachmas just for a morning draught (Ḍaif 1991: 357-59). The poets always complained about the expensive price of the wine (al-Asad 1988: 222). In the so-called "rules of the Himyarite", the governer of the city and his aides supervised the selling and the price of bread, wine and oil (Pigulewskaja 1969: 204f.).

V. Wine in religious cult

J. Wellhausen wrote "Eigentlich trinken arabische Götter überhaupt keinen Wein; aber Dusares war auf syrischen Boden zum Dionysus geworden" (Wellhausen 1902: 269). If Wellhausen is right, it should be noted that this is true only for the Arab deities of the Bedouin society, especially for North Arabia like the god *Šay' al-Qawm*, but Arabic deities of the sedentary life of high culture like South Arabia probably were different and drank wine. On the other hand, some of the bedouin deities also drank wine, but that was after the way of life changed, when Dionysos began to be worshipped, who resembled the Nabataean god *Ḏū š-Šarā.*

J. Henninger did research on sacrificing among the North Arabs and South Arabs. He discussed the sacrificial offerings and came to the conclusion that they practiced libation sacrifice (Henninger 1981: 221f.). This has been supported by South Arabic inscriptions; it seems that the word *mslm* (Sab.Dic.: 126) was used for a kind of an altar which was used for libation sacrifice; unfortunately we do not know exactly which kind of libation had been practiced on this altar, whether it was water, milk, oil or wine (Höfner 1965: 550-52). In any case we must assume that they used wine; this kind of dedication is well known in the Ancient Near East (Heimpel 1990: 1-5).
Some of these *Maslam*-altars are inscribed with South Arabic inscriptions; these inscriptions do not give us information about the libation offering. They contain mainly dedications to different deities. However, the forms of these *Maslam*-altars indicate that they were used for libation.

In addition to the *Maslam*-altars we have the Sabaic word *mhy'* which has as one of its different meanings "libation" (Beeston 1981: 21-24). This term could be found in one of the *Maslam*-altars: *mhy' ḍrwnhn wmhy' qblt* "libation of *ḍrw* and libation of *qblt*" (CIH 439; Müller 1988: 633).

We do not know which South Arabic deity was symbolized by the wine-branch, and we have no exact information about a wine deity in South Arabia like *Geštinanna* "wine of the sky " in Mesopotamia (Leick 1991: 67; Edzard 1965: 67f.) or Dionysos in the Hellenistic world or *Ḏū š-Šarā* by the Nabataeans. But there are some indications that the Sabaic deity *Almaqah* was identified with Dionysos (Garbini 1973: 15-22). Bacchic scenes are found in South Arabian art (Costa 1987: 479-84) Our information about the use of wine in cults in North Arabia is also restricted. In Pre-Islamic times wine *as-sakar* together with *as-sawīq* "barley-water", which was also defined as a kind of mush made of wheat or barley with sugar and dates, were given to visiters or pilgrims of the *ka'ba* (Yāqūt IV: 280).

Quraiš gave the pilgrims a fermented raisin-drink (*az-zabīb al-manūḏ*, Lisān, article *saqaya*). We know that the Nabataean god *Ḏū š-Šarā* was similar to Dionysos (Höfner 1965 433-35; Zayadine 1989: 109-111). The Nabataeans offered libation to their deities. Strabo states that the Nabataeans used libations in offerings: "They worship the sun, bulding an altar on the top of the house, and pouring libations on it daily" (Strabo XVI: 4, 26).
In a Lihyanite inscription there is some information about sacrificing with wine to the Lihyanite deity *Ḏū Ġābat*: "*lḏġbt ghbl yn*"; "for Ḏū Ġābat wine-skins" (Caskel 1954: 116f., No. 82). The mythological king *Ǧaḏīmat* from al-Ḥīra presented a gift of wine to the *Farqadān* (Jacob 1897: 105).

Libation was used in Palmyra. The inscription discussed above is an example for religious banquets. Recently a Palmyrene inscription was found in the

Hadramitic city of Qanā. The text, which is on an amphora, mentioned a wine dedication *ḥnk yn* (Shifman 1992: 118, 120).

There is some information about North Arab funerals; they gave water and wine libations as gifts for their dead, and they poured water and wine on the tombs of the dead (Wellhausen 1897: 182); for example, on the tomb of *al-A'šā* in Manfūḥa in Yamāma, his friends used to meet and drink wine and poured what was left over on the tomb (al-Asad 1988: 223).

VI. Wine prohibition

There is no indication that wine drinking was forbidden in Southern Arabia, but for the North Arabs we have some sources which prohibit wine. These are from Palmyrene inscriptions and from classical and Arab authors.

In a Palmyrene inscription is some information about wine prohibition. This inscription was made by a Nabataean horse-man named *'Ubaidū* son of *Ġānimū* son of *Sa'dallāt*, who served in the fort and camp of 'Āna on the Euphrates. This inscription is written on an altar and dedicated to the god *Šay' al-Qawm*, the good and bountiful god who does not drink wine. The inscription is the following (CIS II: 3973; Cooke 1903: 140B).
Text:
1. *[t]rtn 'lwt' 'ln 'bd 'bydw br 'nmw*
2. *[b]r š'dlt nbṭy' rwḥy' dy hw' prš*
3. *[b]ḥyrt wbmšryt' dy 'n'*
4. *lšy' 'lqwm 'lh' ṭb' wškr' dy l'*
5. *št' ḥmr' 'l ḥywhy wḥyy m'yṯy*
6. *w'bdw 'ḥwhy wš'dlt brh byrḥ*
7. *[']lwl šnt 443 wdkyr zbyd' br*
8. *šm'wn br bl'qb gyrh wrḥmh qdm*
9. *šy' 'lqwm 'lh' ṭb' wdkyr kl*
10. *..m'yd 'lwt' 'ln w'mr dkyryn*
11. *[h]' 'ln klhwn bṭb*

Translation:
1. These [t]wo altars made by 'Ubaidū son of Ġānimū
2. [son] of Sa'dallāt, the Nabataean, from (the tribe) Rūḥayyā, who was a horse-man
3. [in] the fort and the camp of 'Āna
4. for Šay' al-qawm, the good and the bountiful god, who does not
5. drink wine. For his life and the life of Muġīṯay
6. and 'Abdū his brothers and Sa'dallāt his son. In the month

7. Elūl, in the year 132 A.D. and may there be remembered Zabīdā son of
8. [Š]im'ūn son of Bēl'aqab his patron and his relatives in front of
9. Šay' al-qawm, the good god, and may there be remembered
10. all visitors of these altars (who visit it) and said: may there be remembered
11. all of them, with good

This inscription is very important because it gives us some information about the cult of *Šay' al-Qawm*, It also gives us some information about the Nabataeans in Palmyra and their relation to it (Teixidor 1973: 405-9). The inscription is written in Palmyrenic. It has some Nabataean characteristics, especially the name of his tribe *rwḥy'*, which is attested in the Nabataean inscriptions.

The deity *Šay' al-Qawm* "protector of the people, or the god who accompanies the people", may be a special deity of the caravans. *Šay' al-Qawm* seems to be a desert deity. This deity has nothing to do with the deities of the rural and the urban cultures, and is connected with bedouin life. There is no evidence of *Šay' al-Qawm* in Nabataean inscriptions from Petra; it is mentioned only one time in the Nabataean inscripions from Hegra, but it is found in the Nabataean inscriptions from Hauran and is well known among the Ṣafā bedouins as *š'hqm* (Teixidor 1979: 85-87; Höfner 1965: 433-35). Apparently this bedouin deity was not a favorite deity in Nabataean cities.

The worshippers of *Šay' al-Qawm* were prohibited from drinking wine and from offering wine libation. This could be interpreted to mean that the cult of *Šay' al-Qawm* was a protest against the Dionysic cult of *Ḏū š-Šarā* the main god of the Nabataeans. It should be noted that the city 'Āna, where the Nabataean horse-man served, was a famous place for wine and it is located in the region of Karana, a famous city for wine from the cuneiform sources already in the second millenium B.C. The wine of this region is also mentioned in the texts of Mari (Dalley 1984: 89-91). The wine of 'Āna was well known in the period before Islam and in Islam as *al-'Āniyya* (Heine 1982: 2ff.); this was known to Arab poets before Islam and later in medieval Islam, for example, the wine of 'Āna (*al-'Āniyya*) is mentioned by the famous poet *Abū Nuwās.*

Lycurgos might be an Arabic deity and was an enemy of Dionysos and wine. The deity *Lycurgos* had been worshipped in Hauran. In a votive inscription the two deities are mentioned together, *Šay' al-Qawm* and *Lycurgos*, side by side, which means that they are different (Zayadine 1989: 117). It has been suggested that *Lycurgos* is the name of a legendary "anti Bacchic" king of the Arabs who had a struggle with Dionysos; the scene of this mythological story was performed at Nysa in Arabia (Diodor III: 66; Höfner 1965: 451).

Apparently, in their early history the Nabataeans did not drink wine; this has been described by Diodor as the following: "It is their custom neither to plant grain, set out any fruit-bearing trees, use wine, nor construct any house; if anyone is found acting contrary to this, death is his penalty" (Diodor XIX: 94).

There is no indication of wine prohibition in the Ancient Near East. Nevertheless, we have some information from the Old Testament about some people in ancient Palestine who did not drink wine; they practised bedouin life like the Nabataeans in their early history. Among these people are the Rechabites and the Nasiraeans; this information is attested in the Old Testament as the following: "We will not drink wine, for our forefather Jonadab, son of Rechab, laid this command to us: You shall never drink wine, neither you nor your children. You shall not build houses or sow seed or plant vineyards. You shall have none of these things. Instead you shall remain tent-dwellers all your lives, so that you may live long in the land where you are sojourners" (Jer. 35:6-10).

In addition to *Šayʿ al-Qawm* there was also a religious group in Arabia before Islam which prohibited wine drinking; this was *al-Aḥnīfiyya* (Watt 1971: 165f.; Jeffery 1934: 112-15). We unfortunately have no solid information about this subject.

In his book *al-Muḥabbar*, the Arabic author Ibn Ḥabīb informed us about twenty-nine persons in the *Ǧāhiliyya* who prohibited wine drinking or did not drink wine, for example: *al-Walīd bin al-Muġīra, Abū Ḏarr al-Ġifārī, Waraqa bin Nawfal* etc. (Ibn Ḥabīb: 237-41) .

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